Claim Amendments:

Following is a complete listing of the claims pending in the application, as amended:

1.   (Currently amended) In a computer network that includes a plurality of networked computer systems, wherein a sending computer system sends an instant message through a chain of one or more computer systems to a destination computer system, a method of acknowledging delivery of the instant message, wherein the criteria for determining the success or failure of the delivery are user specified, the method comprising the following:

> an act of the sending computer system identifying the user specified criteria for returning a successful acknowledgment message corresponding to the instant message ~~to the user~~;
>
> an act of the sending computer system sending the instant message to the destination computer system and receiving a successful acknowledgment message;
>
> an act of the sending computer system, upon receiving a successful acknowledgement message, determining whether the user specified criteria for returning a successful acknowledgment message are met; and
>
> an act of the sending computer system returning a successful acknowledgment message corresponding to the instant message only if the user specified criteria have been met.

2.   (Original) A method in accordance with Claim 1, wherein the sending computer system comprises a server computer system associated with a sending client computer system.

3.   (Original) A method in accordance with Claim 1, wherein the sending computer system comprises a server computer system associated with a sending client computer system.

4.   (Original) A method in accordance with Claim 3, wherein the act of the computer system identifying the user specified criteria for returning a successful acknowledgment message comprises the following:

> an act of the sending server computer system receiving a data field representing the user specified criteria with the instant message; and

> an act of the sending server computer system reading the data field to identify the user specified criteria.

5.   (Original) A method in accordance with Claim 1, wherein the act of the computer system identifying the user specified criteria for returning a successful acknowledgment message comprises the following:

> an act of reading a data field representing the user specified criteria from a database accessible to the sending computer system.

6.   (Original) A method of Claim 1, wherein

the user specified criteria is a "single hop" criteria, and

the act of the sending computer system determining whether the user specified

> criteria for returning a successful acknowledgment message are met comprises an act of determining that the user specified criteria have been met if the first server computer system in the chain of computer systems receives the instant message.

7.   (Original) A method in accordance with Claim 1, wherein

the user specified criteria is a "deep or" criteria, and

the act of the sending computer system determining whether the user specified

> criteria for returning a successful acknowledgment message are met comprises an act of determining that at least one of the intended recipients successfully received the instant message under the "deep or" criteria.

8.　(Original) A method in accordance with Claim 7 wherein the act of determining that at least one of the intended recipients received the instant message comprises the following:

>an act of the computer system transmitting the instant message to the next computer system in the chain of computer systems along with an indication that the user specified criteria for returning a successful acknowledgment message is that at least one of the intended recipients successfully received the instant message under the "deep or" criteria;

>an act of the computer system receiving an acknowledgment message from the next computer system in the chain of computer systems indicating whether or not at least one of the intended recipients successfully received the instant message under the "deep or" criteria; and

>an act of the computer system determining that at least one of the intended recipients has received the instant message if the acknowledgment message from the next computer system indicates that at least one of the intended recipients successfully received the instant message under the "deep-or" criteria.

9.　(Original) A method in accordance with Claim 1, wherein

the user specified criteria is a "deep and" criteria, and

the act of the sending computer system determining whether the user specified
>criteria for returning a successful acknowledgment message are met comprises an act of the sending computer system determining that all of the intended recipients successfully received the instant message under the "deep and" criteria.

10.　(Original) A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instruction for performing the acts recited in Claim 1.

11.　(Currently amended) In a computer network that includes a plurality of networked computer systems, wherein a sending computer system sends an instant message through a chain of one or more computer systems to a destination computer

system, a method of acknowledging delivery of the instant message, wherein the criteria for determining the success or failure of the delivery are user specified, the method comprising the following:

an act of the sending computer system sending the instant message to the destination computer system;

an act of the sending computer system receiving an—a successful acknowledgment message for the sent instant message;

a step for the sending computer system determining whether user specified criteria for returning a successful acknowledgment message corresponding to the received successful acknowledgment message for the instant message are met; and

an act of the sending computer system returning a successful acknowledgment message corresponding to the received successful acknowledgment message for the instant message only if the user specified criteria have been met.

12.   (Currently amended) A method in accordance with Claim 11, wherein the user specified criteria is a singe hop criteria,

the step for the sending computer system determining whether user specified criteria for returning a successful acknowledgment message corresponding to the received successful acknowledgment message for the instant message are met comprises an act of determining that the user specified criteria are satisfied if the first server computer system in the chain of computer systems receives the instant message.

13.   (Currently amended) A method in accordance with Claim 11, wherein the user specified criteria is a deep or criteria,

the step for the sending computer system determining whether user specified criteria for returning a successful acknowledgment message corresponding to the received successful acknowledgment message for the instant message are met comprises an act of determining that the use

specified criteria are satisfied if at least one of the intended recipients receives the instant message.

14.   (Currently amended) A method in accordance with Claim 11, wherein the user specified criteria is a deep and criteria,

the step for the sending computer system determining whether user specified criteria for returning a successful acknowledgment message corresponding to the received successful acknowledgment message for the instant message are met comprises an act of determining that the user specified criteria are satisfied if all of the intended recipients receives the instant message.

15.   (Original) A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing the specific acts and the step recited in Claim 11.

16.   (New) A computer-readable medium containing instructions for controlling a sending computer system to determine whether delivery of an instant message was successful, by a method comprising:

sending via a computer network the instant message to a destination computer system;

receiving via the computer network a successful acknowledgement message for the instant message;

determining whether the successful acknowledgement message satisfies a user-specified criterion for success of delivery of the instant message; and

when it is determined that user-specified criterion is satisfied, indicating that delivery of the instant message was successful.

17.   (New) The computer-readable medium of claim 16 wherein the sending computer system receives the instant message from a client computer system that originated the instant message and provides the user-specified criterion.

18.   (New) The computer-readable medium of claim 17 wherein the indicating includes sending a successful acknowledgement message to the client computer system.

19.   (New) The computer-readable medium of claim 16 wherein the sending computer system is a client computer system that originates the instant message and the indicating includes notifying a user that the delivery of the instant message was successful.

20.   (New) The computer-readable medium of claim 16 wherein the instant message is sent to multiple destination computer systems and the user-specified criterion specifies that the delivery is successful when at least one destination computer system receives the instant message.

21.   (New) The computer-readable medium of claim 16 wherein the instant message is sent to multiple destination computer systems and the user-specified criterion specifies that the delivery is successful when all the destination computer systems receive the instant message.

22.   (New) The computer-readable medium of claim 16 wherein the instant message is sent via a chain of one or more computer systems to the destination computer system and the user-specified criterion specifies that the delivery is successful when at least one of the computer systems in the chain receives the instant message.

23.   (New) The computer-readable medium of claim 22 wherein the delivery is successful when the first computer system in the chain receives the instant message.

24.   (New) A sending computer system for determining whether delivery of an instant message sent via a network was successful, comprising:

    a component that sends via the network the instant message to a destination computer system;

a component that receives via the network a successful acknowledgement message for the sent instant message; and

a component that indicates delivery of the instant message was successful when the successful acknowledgement message satisfies a user-specified criterion for successful delivery of the instant message.

25.   (New) The system of claim 24 wherein the sending computer system receives the instant message from a client computer system that originated the instant message and provides the user-specified criterion.

26.   (New) The system of claim 25 wherein the component that indicates delivery of the instant message was successful sends a successful acknowledgement message to the client computer system.

27.   (New) The system of claim 24 wherein the sending computer system is a client computer system that originated the instant message and the component that indicates notifies a user that the delivery of the instant message was successful.

28.   (New) The system of claim 24 wherein the instant message is sent to multiple destination computer systems and the user-specified criterion specifies that the delivery is successful when at least one destination computer system receives the instant message.

29.   (New) The system of claim 24 wherein the instant message is sent to multiple destination computer systems and the user-specified criterion specifies that the delivery is successful when all the destination computer systems receive the instant message.

30.   (New) The system of claim 24 wherein the instant message is sent via a chain of one or more computer systems of the network to the destination computer system and the user-specified criterion specifies that the delivery is successful when at least one of the computer systems in the chain receives the instant message.